

REMARKS

The Examiner's communication dated June 20, 2007 has been received and carefully considered. In conformance with the applicable statutory requirements, this paper constitutes a complete reply and/or a bona fide attempt to advance the application to allowance. Specifically, claims 1, 5, 7, 11, 17, and 20 have been amended and claims 2, 3, 4, 13, 18, and 19 have been cancelled. Reexamination and/or reconsideration of the application as amended are respectfully requested.

The Office Action

The drawings are objected to under 37 C.F.R. § 1.83(a).

Claim 20 is objected to for a minor informality.

Claims 5, 13, and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

Claims 1, 2, 4, 8, 10, 13 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Braun et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,643,296).

Drawing Objections

As indicated in the preceding section, the Examiner objected to the drawings. Specifically, the Examiner indicated that the drawings must show every feature of the invention specified in the claims. By the amendments contained herein, the claims have been carefully amended to overcome the drawing objections.

In particular, conveyor pans in claim 1 at line 5 has been amended to be included as part of the clause "a securing means for a connecting component that links adjacent conveyor pans together."

The recitation of "a goaf side" in claim 1 is now explicitly supported by the specification.

The recitations of "a connecting component," "securing means," and "a scraper chain" are each respectively included within means-for clauses. For example, "a connecting component" and "securing means" are contained within the clause "a securing means for a connecting component that links adjacent conveyor pans

together" of claim 1. The recitation of "a scraper chain" is now contained within the clause "a return race for guiding a scraper chain" of claim 1.

Claim 3, which called for an apex line of the guide plate of claim 1 to be located below an articulation point of an advancing system or pusher beams disposed on the goaf side for moving the face conveyor, has been cancelled.

One occurrence of the phrase "toggle bolts" in claim 7 has been deleted and the other occurrence is now contained within the phrase "the securing means includes toggle bolt sockets for receiving toggle heads of the toggle bolts that are engageable in the toggle bolt sockets."

Claim 12 calls for an upper section of the guide plate to be welded to an underside or front face of a horizontal web of an approximately T-shaped or L-shaped rolled steel side section. With reference to Figure 2 of the subject application, an upper section 52 of guide plate 50 is shown as welded to an underside or front face of a horizontal web 17 of an approximately T-shaped or L-shaped rolled steel section. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the drawing objection concerning "an L-shaped rolled steel section" in claim 12 be removed.

Claim 13 has been cancelled so the objection concerning "a removable trough" is moot.

Finally, the Examiner objected to the drawings by indicating that the "two support plates" recited in claim 14 are not shown. The recitation of at least two support plates is provided in claim 15, not claim 14. Moreover, the paragraph beginning at line 10 on page 9 of the specification describes support plates 30 and 32, which are illustrated in Figure 1. Nonetheless, this same paragraph has been amended so that all occurrences of "support plates" include or are associated with reference numerals 30 and 32.

Claim Objections

Claim 20 has been carefully amended to overcome the claim objection thereto. In particular, "much" in line 9 of claim 20 has been changed to -- muck --.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph

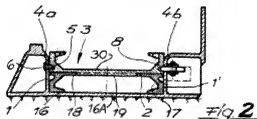
Claim 5 has been carefully amended to overcome the § 112, second paragraph, rejection. In particular, the recited ranges have been amended such that the lowest angle recited in association with the lower section is greater and thus steeper relative to the conveyor bottom than the highest angle in the range recited in association with the upper section.

Claim 12, which was also rejected under § 112, second paragraph, has been cancelled.

Claim 17 has been carefully amended to overcome the § 112, second paragraph rejection applied thereagainst. In particular, "the horizontal web" has been replaced with -- a horizontal web --. Also, "guide means for a cutting machine" has been replaced by -- the guide means for a mining machine --, which is properly introduced in parent claim 1.

The Claims Distinguish Patentably Over the References of Record

Claim 1, as amended, calls for the lower section and the upper section of the angled guide plate to be generally flat and include an angle of approximately 150° to 170°. Amended claim 1 further calls for an apex line of the guide plate to be disposed at level of the conveyor bottom. These limitations were previously included in dependent claims 2 and 4, which were rejected along with claim 1 as being anticipated by Braun et al. Particularly, in rejecting these claims over Braun et al., the Examiner refers to the following figure of Braun et al.:



At best, this figure shows a loading ramp which runs straight from the floor to the uppermost part of an outward race. There is no disclosure or fair suggestion of any function of the part or component regarded by the Examiner as a "static loading ramp".

Moreover, the entire specification of Braun et al. deals with the mounting of the outward race as a "wear tub". The straight loading ramp depicted in Braun et al. fails to provide the benefits afforded by the invention of amended claim 1. In particular, the straight loading ramp of Braun et al. fails to minimize the disadvantages of climbing of a face conveyor since the long straight part of the loading ramp ends in a section which runs vertical to the floor and the bottom of the outward race.

In contrast, amended claim 1 is directed to an angled loading ramp having its apex line disposed at the level of the conveyor bottom. This is neither shown nor fairly suggested in the Braun et al. reference, or in any other prior art reference of record. Further, the angle between the upper section and the lower section of the ramp in claim 1 is heated to be 150°-170°. Again, this is neither shown nor fairly suggested in Braun et al.

Accordingly, for at least these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1 and claims 5-17 dependent therefrom are in condition for allowance.

Dependent claim 5 calls for the lower section to be inclined relative to the conveyor bottom by an angle of approximately 74°-82° and the upper section to be inclined relative to the conveyor bottom by an angle of approximately of 51°-59°. Referring to Figure 2 of Braun et al., the alleged upper section (i.e., "horizontal area of loading ramp, near the area of where reference numeral 4a is disclosed") is not inclined relative to a conveyor bottom by an angle of approximately 51°-59°.

Dependent claim 12 calls for the upper section of the guide plate to be welded to an underside or front face of a horizontal web of an approximately T-shaped or L-shaped rolled steel section. The alleged upper section in Braun et al. is not welded to an underside or front face of a horizontal web of an approximately T-shaped or L-shaped rolled of steel section.

Claim 20, as amended, calls for a curved or angled guide plate having a lower front surface and an upper front surface, wherein the lower front surface is positioned at a greater angle relative to a support surface than the upper front surface, and further wherein an angle defined between the lower front surface and the upper front surface is approximately 150°-170°. The alleged lower and upper sections of Braun et al. fail to

define an angle therebetween that is approximately 150°-170°. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that independent claim 20 and new claims 21-23 dependent therefrom are in condition for allowance.

Dependent claim 21 calls for the upper front surface to be inclined relative to the support surface at an angle of approximately 45°-65°. The alleged horizontal surface in Braun et al. appears to be oriented approximately parallel relative to a support surface (i.e., the alleged horizontal surface is not angled relative to the support surface).

Dependent claim 22 calls for the upper front surface to be inclined relative to a support surface at an angle of approximately 51°-59°. Again, the alleged horizontal surface in Braun et al. appears to be approximately parallel to any alleged support surface.

Dependent claim 23 calls for an apex line defined between the lower and upper front surfaces to be disposed at a level of the conveyor bottom. Contrary to the Examiner's assertion in the last Office Action, an apex line defined between the alleged lower and upper sections in Braun et al. appears to be disposed above the conveyor bottom, not "at a level of the conveyor bottom."


CONCLUSION

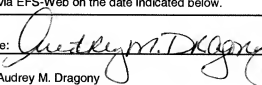
All formal and informal matters having been addressed, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. It is believed that the claim changes clearly place the application in condition for allowance, defining over any fair teaching attributable to the references of record. Alternatively, if the Examiner is of the view that the application is not in clear condition for allowance, it is requested that the Examiner telephone the undersigned for purposes of conducting a telephone interview to resolve any outstanding differences. Accordingly, an early notice of allowance is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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9-7-07
Date


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